

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director H. Dale Hall**  
**USDA's 84<sup>th</sup> Agricultural Outlook Forum**  
***"Energizing Rural America in the Global Marketplace"***  
**Conservation Session**  
**Environmental Quality and Agriculture**  
**February 21, 2008**  
**Arlington, Virginia**

*Audience: Farm Organizations, Agribusiness, Financial Firms, Universities,  
International Organizations, Government and the Media.*

**Introduction**

- Thank you for inviting me to speak today. I am pleased to have this opportunity to talk to you about the importance of conservation partnerships in expanding the multiple environmental benefits of USDA's conservation programs.
- We have moved away from a world in which land and wildlife habitat can be managed within a refuge border or a fence line. The public we serve has changed and expects that we can accomplish more of our goals through partnerships and voluntary incentives, instead of relying on regulations and land acquisitions to protect natural resources.
- More than 70 percent of our nation's landscape is in private ownership. The health of our fish and wildlife populations depends on habitat found on private lands. For the Service to achieve its conservation goals and live up to its trust responsibilities, it is critical that we coordinate conservation efforts with USDA, other federal and state agencies, landowners and our other conservation partners.

**Key Messages**

- Coordination among federal, state and local agencies, non-governmental organizations and private landowners who share the goal of conserving the natural resources and enhancing the environmental quality of our nation's agricultural lands is the most effective way of expanding the multiple environmental benefits of USDA's conservation programs.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works closely with USDA— in particular the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA)—and other conservation partners at the national, regional, state and local levels to help deliver a variety of Farm Bill conservation programs in ways that benefit the nation's fish and wildlife resources.
- The value of communicating and coordinating our conservation efforts and priorities is recognized at the national level through numerous interagency

agreements that address the need for sharing information, quantifying conservation program benefits, conserving species at-risk and facilitating development of market-based approaches to conservation.

- Coordination at the regional level with FSA and partner conservation organizations has resulted in new conservation practices under the Conservation Reserve Program, which benefit waterfowl and grassland birds in the Prairie Pothole Region and species at-risk associated with longleaf pine habitats in the Southeast.
- The value of state-level coordination is recognized through Service participation in NRCS State Technical Committees where there are numerous examples across the country of how USDA conservation programs benefit high priority fish and wildlife resources.
- Working one-on-one with producers at the local level to restore fish and wildlife habitat is the hallmark of the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, which provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners and Tribes who are willing to work with us and our other conservation partners on a voluntary basis to help meet the habitat needs of our federal trust species.
- Effective conservation partnerships at all levels of program development, implementation and evaluation are the key to the success of USDA conservation programs during the past 20 years and will continue to be key to their future success.